

3/25/72

Dear Charlie,

This was not a day like other days. It began with discovery that my mailbox-and pine alone along this road - was missing, box, root and branch (the branch is a tube for the morning papers). Even the hole ~~left~~ when the pipe was pulled out of the blacktop was neatly filled in. This does not happen on normal days, nor is it a frequent occurrence that the disassembled family later turned up in our pond.

But, it was a different beginning, so I decided to make use of the nice, above-freezing temperature and a weak sun to liberate a mountain (aka bull) pine from the respressive influence of wild roses and honeysuckle. Are you familiar with the clinging-vine line? Well, if you are not familiar with the eastern branch of the honeysuckle family, it wraps itself as it clings and it is really a mutation of the bean Jack dropped, reaching for the skies. Now this particular species of wild rose, the kind that was once touted as making living fences (no exaggeration) was especially attractive to the previous owners of this property. It is not that the blooms are nice or plentiful or sweet-scented, for none of these things is true. As they saw it, the superior advantage of these roses, for which they had no earthly use, is that they were free. The government gave them away free. (That we can't blame on Nixon or LBJ.)

As roses goes, these, when they can climb, are the Giant(est) Sequoias of the rose family. One I eliminated three years ago was so large I sawed it down like a tree. When I then dug the root out and laid it aside, intending to burn it, it looked like a tree stump. The shape of the larger roots, after the smaller ones were trimmed off, made the whole thing rather attractive (they can be attractive only in death) and a neighbor has it on her mantel (we got too much on ours already). Am I giving you an idea of roses? and a conspiracy when they grow together?

This is a conspiracy to kill, believe me. They kill trees, and I've been spending an hour or two a day pulling them up, mostly honeysuckle. Because this tree was a particular challenge, I let it wait for a good time. With the beginning of the day, this seemed like the right one.

What honeysuckle I got out I actually burned in the fireplace tonight! I mean it was up to two inches thick. But the roses were a different breed. They are thick enough to use between big pieces of log, but they are not as pliant as the honeysuckle. And they have a foresighted habit of sending branches off to twist around separate limbs. The branches I did cut off ran to 50' m which gives you a notion of the main trunks, hun? Those I can't even pull down. But I sure as hell got torn up. These roses take their vengeance. Each bite (can't call the cut of such thorns pricks) sharpened my mind a bit. I enjoy the outside work not only because it has to be done and is good for me and gets me in the fresh air (yup, we still have it on the mountain most of the time) but because I really don't have to pay much attention to what I am doing (i always get cut and chewed anyway) and I can think of other things, which really gets me to the point, the foregoing being intended for Jamie's (hoped for) edification (s, she can learn a new word).

From here on is not for Jamie and not for any other critic and not for action. It is not connected with the JFK assassination and it deals with the kind who have the habit and means of hurting. In fact, they are pretty good at it. Even your people could call them pros. I have developed an interest in the Cotronei family. They handle the hard stuff. I am interested in their M.O., especially as they use strangers and set the innocent up if their people get caught. I have a classic case of this on which a completely innocent man got convicted when a law student should have gotten him acquitted, a case so notorious that a law professor quit professoring for three years, solved the crime, got a reversal, and even then, with the case solved, couldn't interest the Mitchellisti in dropping the case against his client and prosecuting the guilty (aka "law and order"). So, the poor man and his unpaid lawyer were forced to a new trial, the patay, already ruined for life and his businesses shot, was acquitted,

and, with the law having worked its majestic way, there the whole matter ended. This is a special kind of law-and-order. I have the letters to the Mitchellists, from the top down, complete with proof, and none was ever answered. Heard Kleindienst on TV lately?

It was a Connecticut case. The victim is named Miller. The horse came in from Canada, with a French Canadian and an old car figuring in the smuggling. The Cotronis are, I think, New Jersey based. It is the method that interests me, how they work, nothing secret. If they and their associates of different territory have a pattern of this kind, where they pick someone with a problem or a need and have him do the carrying across the border, I'd be much interested in it. There is also a P.D. whose narcs can't work with me except one way, me to them, also interested. Special complication having nothing to do with me. They suspect that they close traditional means of importation into their area new ones, including Canada, are opening up. They can't prove it but are interested in what I have already given them.

Now don't go rushing out and debrief the computer. Think it over. Maybe it would be bad, esp. for the future, maybe not bad, if you spoke to your local narcs and asked them if they know anything, not secret along this line. But when they ask you why how will it seem if you say, well I have this guy who is a friend and is a writer? Maybe not good, huh? So, first of all, just think.

Now, going along with this I have several cases where big-name legal talen defends the accused and manages to get him convicted. Sound more interesting? If I can get to the bottom of this thing I think most honest police dpts. will be happy about it. But, remember, Saint Edgar is not among my fans. And they all have to live with (or in spite of) him. In two cases involving one lawyer, the accused couldn't begin to come up with his standard fee.

So, for the moment, this is a limited interest in how the heroin smugglers use patsys to bring the stuff in from Canada, how they get their pigeons, etc., and how customary the practise. I would imagine that their own people are too precious to them and too dangerous for, if known, they don't have to talk to point. If they are caught that alone tells all.

Before too long I won't have to tell you more. You'll have guessed what I'm talking about, and whom. And that, too, please keep to yourself. It could be better for all of us. Remember, I live in so isolated an area I go swimming naked (good for the aching bones as they age and stiffen) and on the stiffer days, when I have reading I must do, do it with the same summer rainment.

It may very well be that you should do and say nothing about it. I know nothing about your personal relationships if any, etc and I do think that on all counts caution is indicated and no risk of any kind worth running. But you know my interest if you ever come across anything you may consider relevant. And I have no way of knowing whether the stuff comes in to your area that way. I'd be inclined to think it is now safer than through a port, which is close enough, or from Mexico, where the campaign against gras has been upped. My own knowledge is limited to the eastern third of that border and only parts of it. To close with a bad pun, I may have doped something out. Best to you all,